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THE

### SPIRIT OF CHRISTIANITY,

COMPARED WITH

## THE SPIRIT OF THE TIMES

IN

# GREAT BRITAIN.

BY GILBERT WAKEFIELD, B. A.
LATE EELLOW OF JESUS COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

- If thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it, if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy foul.

  Ezekiel, xxxiii. 9.
- I fay unto you, If these should hold their peace, the stones will cry out.

  Luke xix. 40.

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## SPIRIT OF CHRISTIANITY, &c.

All things invite
To praceful counsels, and the settled state
Of order; how in safety best we may
Compose our present evils, with regard
Of what we are, and where! dismissing quite
All thoughts of war: ye have what I advise.

MILTON.

HOSE, who know me personally, will be very ready to bear testimony to the privacy and seclusion of my life; and the last leaf of this little pamphlet \* will abundantly ascertain to those, who do not know me, that of late, at least, "my days must have been honestly laborious, and my nights intensely studious," in a manner utterly inconsistent with clandestine plots against government and all associations with republicans and levellers for the overthrow of our constitution: but the circumstances of the times impressed my mind with such force, as to impel me with reluctance to interrupt the course of my studies for a few hours, to deliver to the public

<sup>\*</sup> The first Edition of this Pamphlet had a list of Mr. W.'s works printed at the end, which is now omitted.

these cursory reflections arising from some palpable specimens of an antichristian spirit. It is my wish and intention, whilst I call things by their true names, to write in conformity to the voice of that religion, whose influence directs and animates my pen on this occasion: but I could not acquit myself to my own conscience for a total silence, upon a reflection, that possibly some individuals, into whose hands these remarks might fall, would be led to a serious examination of their sentiments and conduct.

That prince of peace (Isaiah ix. 6.) the bleffed founder of Christianity, declares thus expressly to his disciples: (Luke ix. 56.) The son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. Now, upon a very moderate computation, fince this country engaged in a war with France, only twelve months ago, two hundred and fifty-thousand lives have been loft in the field and on the scaffold; not to mention the numberless afflictions of the living connected with this horrible devastation. I fuppose also, that the combined powers on the continent would not have been able to profecute their hostilities without the interference of this country; and that the murders, which have taken place among the French themselves, from that of the King on the throne to the meanest peafant, are truly assignable to that fermentation which the interference of the same combination has excited.

These enormities, therefore, are justly imputable, in a great degree, if not entirely, to the fecret machinations or open efforts of our government. And, in the mean time, by what titles do we denominate ourselves? Truly, Defenders of the Faith, guardians of the Protestant interest, and the profesfors of a reformed religion. Wars, murders, and affassinations are then, it should seem, the proper fruits of a purer profession of Christianity; that fystem of peace and love, unlimited and universal, to the whole human race! Be it so! but in my judgement, no supposeable circumstance can excufe the shedding of man's blood to a disciple of Christ, but an uplifted fword ready to fall on his own head. It is an awful thing to quench that life, which the Creator has breathed into the noftrils of his children.

Great allowances will be made by every compassionate and candid mind for the situation of Kings, surrounded as they are by those, who promote their own interests, by disguising, concealing, and perverting the truth: but when these Kings hear daily the voice of scripture sounding in their ears the accents of gentleness, love, and mercy; and are presented with a perfect example of holiness and virtue in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they are taught to revere and imitate; no man whatever, not devoid of rationality, can imagine, that a state of warfare with his species.

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of the Gospel. Even Kings with all the disadvantages of their situation, MUST KNOW, that the character of Saul, breathing out threatenings and slaughter (Acts ix. 1.) against his own brethren, the children of the same Father, can never be conformable to the denomination of a most gracious and most religious sovereign, or acceptable to the King of Kings.

By the commencement of war, commerce is interrupted, trade declines, manufactures ceafe; thoufands are deprived of their subfistence. mere support of life, and as a refuge from famine and distress, manufacturers become foldiers; and are led into the field to the deliberate murder of men, against whom they have not conceived the least emotion of refentment; and whom they hew in pieces without one impulse of private animosity, at the mere infligation of their superiours. possible to devise a case, more horribly flagitious on the part of their rulers, and more wretchedly abandoned on their own,-more degraded even below brutality itself, than this; if humanity be a virtue, if love and good will the characteristics of revelation? The true follower of Fefus weeps bitterly in fecret over this infane delufion, this tremendous profligacy, of his species: he wishes for the wings of a dove, that he may fly to the extremities

mities of the creation from so black and nefarious a spectacle, to be at rest!

I am affured, by a friend, upon the authority of a Peer then present, that the Duke of Portland, a nobleman celebrated for the mildness of his virtues and his amiable manners, and, I am perfuaded, most defervedly; declared in the House of Lords, that "the prefent war was necessary for the support and defence of the Christian Religion!" To what, in common charity, can we impute fo strange a sentiment, but to a wretched infatuation, engendered by timidity and false alarm; or a most piteous imbecility of understanding, with respect to the point in discussion? Will this noble perfon condescend to fingle out one action in the life of Christ, one precept of his lips, which countenances this perfuasion; that the religion of the gospel can be defended and propagated by the fword? When Peter, laudably zealous for the fafety of his mafter's person, drew his sword in the defence (Matthew xxi. 52.) of Fesus; he received no approbation for the vigour of his interference, but a gentle and magnanimous rebuke: Put up again thy fword into his place! for all they, that take the fword, shall perish with the fword. A rebuke, which the same mouth would have given, and will one day give, to the Peer in question.

The former part of this reproof was applicable

Peter only; the latter is pregnant with a momentous denunciation to all the destroyers of mankind; from the petty ravager, to the mighty poten-It were good for them had they never been born. It were better for them, if they could atone in this life, by the shedding of their own blood, for the blood of thousands and tens of thousands. that is crying against them for vengeance from the earth: if, after flaying with the sword, they could perish with the sword; and thus escape the retribution of a more awful fentence, that awaits, upon the authority of Christ himself, the rebels to his gentle and pacific reign, at his fecond coming to judge the earth. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and flay them before me. (Luke xix. 27.)

My old friend, Dr. Pearce the master, with the fellows of Jesus College, Cambridge, of which number I once was myself:---my old friend Dr. Milner, Master of Queen's College, in the same University, and the sellows of that society;---go to Chapel (it is a reasonable supposition, reader! for the construction of an argument, though the Master and fellows are that portion of collegial societies which least regard the public services of religion; I speak what I know, and testify what I have seen) the Masters and Fellows, I say, of these respective colleges go to chapel, can read with approbation the wisdom of Gamaliel's advice; (Asts,

v. 38.) Refrain from these men, and let them alone; for, if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but, if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God :- they can hear, with furprise and indignation, that Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and people of Israel, gathered together, to crush truth, and to destroy opinions, by demolishing the persons of Christ and his Apostles: they can listen with reverence to the commands of Fesus; Gather not up the tares (Matt. xiii. 29.) left, while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them; but let both grow together until the harvest:-they can hear the declaration of a chief apostle; (2Tim. iii. 12.) All, that will live godly in Christ Fesus, shall suffer persecution; a declaration, conformable to a previous prediction of his Master; (John xvi. 2.) They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that who soever killeth you, will think that he doeth God fervice: - these reverend Masters and Fellows, I say; these protestants against Popish tyranny and persecution, these professors of reformed christianity, can come with such precepts of Fesus and his Apostles in their ears and mouths, and deprive, in one case, Mr. Frend, and in the other, Mr. Palmer, of their Fellowships; possibly the only means of subfistence to these gentlemen; and leave men of education, inured to the decent comforts and conveniences of life,

to the casualties of benevolent commiseration! Surely Mr. Palmer's usage as a criminal, with the iron entering into his foul, and a transportation of feven long years to the Antipodes themselves, constituted a sufficient punishment for his offence. But Pandæmonium was not satisfied. Dr. Milner, and his coadjutors, that most evangelical fraternity, yearned, in their godly jealoufy for church and king, to go through with this pious work of edifying chaflisement; to give good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over into their brother's bosom! I should prefer, I confess, for my own part, religious worship in Rimman's temple, or a Mahometan Mosque, to the fervice of a Cambridge chapel with Christians of this complexion: and I would give with rapture to a French Deist, aspurity and perfection, compared with fuch apostates to the liberty and fanctity of the gospel, the right hand of fellowship. Oh! my soul! come not thou into their fecret.

I observed, on passing the other day through St. Paul's Church-yard, a Sermon, obcasioned by the execution of the French Queen, from a most excellent person, equally respectable sorhis abilities and virtues, the Rev. Thomas Rennell, Prebendary of Winchester: a sermon big with denunciation of woes and destruction on the French. I would ask my friend, upon whose authority, as a Christian preacher, he employs the language, that pervades

that, and even his former, publication? Can he, with his good fense, suppose for a single moment, that his Saviour will approve those menaces, which even the preacher himself must feel shocked at imagining that Christ could use? He did not imprecate, but wept bitterly, even over that ungrateful, that etrrupt, that perfecuting, that bloody city, Ferusalem herself; Ferusalem, the deliberate, and malicious, and infulting murderer, with all the mockery of a judicial process, of it's greatest benefactor and best citizen, Christ himself. His language, on every occasion, was not the language of asperity and bitterness, but of poignant sympathy, of difinterested emotion, of compassionate diffress: If thou hadst known (Luke xix. 42.) at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace! Alas! for thee, Chorazin! alas! for thee, Bethfaida! (Matt. xi. 21.) Has then the palpable darkness, that overspreads this land, penetrated also into the dwellings of the Israelites? Seeing do they not fee? and hearing, do they not hear? Had my friend so little recollection of the records of falvation; fo little feeling of that spirit, which characterifes the followers of the Nazarene, that he must emulate James and John in preserence to Jesus; that he must set the desciples above their master, and call down fire from heaven to consume the French Samaritans? And for what does he make himself a judge instead of a hearer of the law? be-

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cause they revise and reject the christianity for sooth! professed in this godly kingdom; and of which our preacher's own sermon is, I suppose, the delicious fruits!!! A thousand arguments convince me that the religion established and taught in this country is a genuine part of that grand apostacy, a limb of that antichrist, predicted in the scriptures; but I will offer to the understanding of my friend, but one argument to this effect, deduced from those very scriptures: which argument, to my apprehensions, if it be delusive, those scriptures themselves are no more than a cunningly devised fable. It is this; and, if I err in this point, I will gladly retract my error, and thank cordially the man, who shall detect it.

Our Lord, (Matt. xiii. 31.) compares the gofpel, to a grain of mustard-seed; which, from being
the least of all seeds, becomes at length the greatest
among herbs, and a tree; so that the birds of the
air come and lodge in the branches of it. He compares it also, (ver. 33.) to leaven, hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened: and in
another evangelist (Mark iv. 27.) to seed, cast
into the ground, which springs and grows up a man
knows not how: producing first the blade, then
the ear, After that the full corn in the ear.

Now it must, I think, be acknowledged, that the prominent idea in all the parables of this nature, is that, of a gradual progression to maturity.

turity. Accomodate this inference to the fact itself, the propagation of Christanity through the If we confider, that large and most populous portions of Afia and Africa were filled with professing Christians in the fourth Century, when our religion was the established religion of the Roman empire; countries, where the Mahometan crescent has long insulted the fallen ruins of the Christian Churches, and added even part of Europe to it's usurpations; we shall see reason to conclude, if I mistake not, that the number of nominal Christians, as distinguished by outward professions and establishments, has rather declined than increased, for the last fourteen centuries. Now reconcile me, who can, upon this fingle argument alone, a profession of religion, which in it's propagation is at least stationary, and perhaps retrogade to the express declarations of scripture, prophecy and the genuine Christianity of the Gospel.

The truth, I presume, is this: The worshippers of Baal have been always numerous, the servants of Jehovah and his Christ, comparatively sew; seven thousand only, among the myriads of the earth: but this number, I am persuaded, has been gradually increasing, and will increase more and more unto the perfect day: that day, when the combined evidence of prophecy and history will be necessary to convince a regenerated world of this wondrous truth: that men, who stile them-

telves Christian preachers, the friends of order and good government, the tender guardians of religion and law, could blow up the trumpet of war in Sion; could call forth their evangelical congregations to desolate the globe with torrents of human blood: and think themselves, all this time, the ministers of Christ!

Again, these preachers call forth all the rhetorick of the schools in describing the enormities of the French republicans. Doubtless that country has become a theatre of dreadful massacre and devastation:

#### Effects unhappy from a generous cause!

And to what origin may these horrors be reasonably assigned? to our own interference, as I remarked before; and that of the combined T—s, most unquestionably. We have somented their divisions; we have given vigour to the private animosities of their several sactions, and called forthall their sury by hunting them down, like beasts for the slaughter. Their crimes, so exaggerated and sounded forth, are occasional and incidental, stricken out by the violent collisions of such an unprecedented conssist; which has given full scope to all the prejudices and passions of outraged humanity. The wickedness of this country, on the other hand, is of a deliberate and systematic kind; abundantly transcending all the enormities

of the French. Who will deny, that we have facrificed in the East, by war and famine (to fay nothing of the world of wretchedness brought upon the living) in the course of our tyrannies in that region, more lives than France contains? that we have deprived the West Indians of their territory, and extirpated their race? that we have enflaved and flaughtered, and are daily flaughtering and enflaving, more fons of Africa, than can easily be numbered? that we are betraying and butchering, under pretence of protection, the royalists of France? that we carry plague and pestilence, misery and ruin, through the universe? Yet we dwell with the complacency of innocence, on our own happy government and reformed church, in contrast with the Atheism and murders of the French? How shall I determine, which exceeds in baseness; our profligacy, or our hypocrisy? It must be, that some signal judgements are laid up in store for such a flagitious system; nor is it easy to conceive, how they could fall upon it, unless the heart were hardened of Pharaoh and his servants. 'A lamentable fact! which the present conduct of this country evinces to demonstration.

In the mean time, our political ministers, who are rioting on the spoils of the public, in an hour pregnant with calamity and distress, may delude the people with an idle vociferation of anarchy and atheism, on one hand, and the blessings of our constitution,

in the fulness of disinterested conviction, may harangue the wondering Palatinate on the happiness and comforts of his country: our Dignitaries of the Church who so freely give what they received freely, may sulminate, from their stalls and pulpits, antichristian anathemas against atheists and republicans, instead of uttering prayers and benedictions in behalf of their supposed errors:—alas! what will the verbera lingua.—the stripes of the tongue avail against the blow of an omnipotent arm, which is already smiting the oppressors of the earth?

The apostle Paul lays it down as a necessary qualification for the office of a bishop, that he be no striker, nor a brawler: (1 Tim. iii. 3.) Have the prelates of England and Ireland proved the legitimacy of their appointment to Bishoprics by these essential characters? Have they appeared, in their capacities of Diocesans and Senators, as the advocates of peace and fuffering humanity? Have they exerted their eloquence, and lent their fuffrage, to stem the career of madness and fanaticism, which are again letting slipthedogs of a holy war to lay waste the earth? Do not all our bishops by their filence at least, and unresisting acquiefcence, countenance these horrid scenes of ferocity and carnage? And when we think of one in particular, particular, my Lord of Rochester, can we forbear affociating with that idea, the lines of Milton?

Incens'd with indignation Satan stood Unterrify'd; and, like a comet burn'd, That fires the length of Ophiuchus huge In th' arctic sky, and from his horrid hair Shakes Pessilence and War.

Themselves, or their advocates, have my leave to reconcile such conduct, if they can, with the patterns and precepts of the Christian dispensation: but the most audacious of the Reevian associators, (who, with an affrontery flagitious beyond description, tell us of equal laws, when the money of one man can do away the effects of an offence, which shall consign another to a dungeon) will not dare to deny, that such demeanour would have been perfectly consistent, if, instead of the present readings in our bibles, the direction of Christ to Peter (John xxi. 15, 16.) had been: Fleece my sheep;—Murder my lambs:

But, what fills up, in my opinion, the measure of our impieties, and leaves them incapable of aggravation, is, the proclamation for a solemn fast; to implore, truly, the assistance of the Almighty in destroying his own image, and desolating his own creation! No energies of language, that I have in store, can delineate my sense of this enor-

mity, this facrilegious profanation of religion. I am constrained to refer the conception of it to expressive silence and secret feeling. I wonder less at the clergy of the establishment, who are accustomed to the trammels of subjection, with the lash of episcopal jurisdiction waving over them, for their compliance with this unholy mandate: but that dissenters can prevail upon themselves thus to prostitute religion at the call of secular interest and ambition, is deplorable indeed! and much consirms me in my persuasion of the general antchristianism, which overspreads this country. But they must stand or fall to their own master: and of him may they sind mercy in that day!

In harmony with the mild and patient temper of that religion, which he was appointed to proclaim, the Apostle Paul observes, (2 Cor. xiii. 8.) that we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth: intending, doubtless, to infinuate the folly, inessicacy, and wickedness of all opposition, and especially of malicious and violent opposition, to the propagation and influence of Truth: all mankind, therefore, and magistrates among the rest, should contentedly resign her to the gentle activities of Reason and the passive tutelage of Time. Truth and restitude, those glorious emanations from the fountain of infinite perfection for the benefit of the human race, must finally prevail;

vail; because the divine will has immutably determined the final happiness of his creatures. Consult History, ask Experience, appeal to the Common Sense of the lowest individual, not deftitute of rationality; and you will find in all ages, and in every breaft, an unanimous conviction, that Error and Villainly alone employ force to confirm their cause and secure their authority. Conscious Integrity fears no antagonist, but ever challenges discussion. It is with the intellect and it's objects, as with morality. The position of Christ is alike applicable to either instance: (John iii. 20.) He, that doeth evil, hateth the light, and cometh not to the light; lest his deeds be brought to conviction: but he, that doeth the truth, cometh to the light; that his deeds may be manifest, that they are wrought in God.

Indeed the Gofpel itself is but one branch from the stem of universal Truth: and who, but tyrants that delight in war ; --- who, but furious fanatics an established Clergy, and a venal Parliament, ever yet talked of crushing Atheism, and promoting Christianity by the sword?

Apply now these criterions of Truth and Virtue to the measures of the British Government. Freedom of enquiry, so far from being challenged in confidence of the justice of their plans and the purity of their constitution; is suppressed by the fummary confutation of penalties and prosecutions: argument D 2

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argument is not opposed by argument, but repelled and filenced by fines and imprisonments. Is this the demeanour of reasonable beings, conscious of upright views, and confiding in honest actions? Is this rectitude of conduct? Are these the ways of integrity and truth? No: a more decifive demonstration cannot possibly be exhibited of a corrupt and pernicious scheme of things; of an administration unprincipled in it's character, and injurious in it's effects. It is shocking to reflect upon the grievous fufferings inflicted on meritorious members of fociety, and in them on their families, relatives, and friends, for those freedoms of speech, which virtuous ministers and well constituted governments would invite rather than difcourage, for the rectification of obliquities pro duced by time, and inseparable from human insti-The Duke of Richmond and Mr. Pitt can acquiesce with heedless indifference or fullen obduracy in the imprisonment and ruin of Mr. Holt, for reprinting verbatim a treatife, which they themselves have, at least virtually, approved, recommended, and contributed to disperse: a degree this, in my opinion, of hardened apostacy, when confidered in all it's circumstances, almost unparalleled in the black register of human crimes. And yet, when such conduct in private life would blast the character for ever, these men, of unblushing faces and unfeeling hearts, continue in high

high estimation with the majority of my countrymen; who exhibit thereby a depravity not much inferiour to that of those monstrous delinquents, even now abhorred by all men of honour, and abundantly secure of the execrations of posterity. Gentle and pacific reform seems too great a bleffing to be vouchfafed to this hyprocritical and depraved people: and the hearts of our descendants will overslow with gratitude to the fupreme controller of events for educing fuch good from evil, by fending this heaven-born minifter, as his chosen instrument, to hasten the melioration of our political condition through those ftorms and tempests, with which the horizon is already blackened. Dreadful, but necessary remedies, in the course of the divine appointment, to rescue the ocean from stagnation, and the atmosphere from pestilence.

I cannot conclude these resections without adverting to the monstrous absurdity, and the unspeakable inconsistency, of Mr. Fox and his adherents, (whose conduct in other respects is so manly and patriotic), in countenancing and supporting the vigorous prosecutions of a war, which they condemn. How is it, that they blame the measures of government, and yet assist and strengthen the execution of their purposes? As if I should encourage a sanguinary russian, who had smitten an inossensive passenger wantonly and unjustly,

and demolish him outright! No: it is certainly their duty, as consistent senators, to oppose every measure, that they make the war destructive to the French, or successful to ourselves. Truth and Rectitude will not accommodate ourselves to human policies and national regards: they are of peremptory obligation; universal, unchangeables and eternal.

Finally: I profess myself a son of peace; a lowly and infignificant, but conscientious, follower of that faviour, at whose coming peace was fung (Luke ii. 14.), and at whose departure, peace was bequeathed (John xiv. 27.). No confideration, I humbly hope, not even of life itself, but in personal defence, could induce me to shed the blood of a fellow-creature, even of a tyrant: nor could any motive, but that of a strong sense of duty, have impelled me to come forward to the public on this occasion. But there is a feason, when inactivity were a crime; and public admonition, even at the hazard of personal comforts, rifes into an indispensable obligation; to those at least, who are defirous that their mafter should not be ashamed of them at his second coming. expecting with trembling folicitude, amidst the incessant occupations of a literary life, that alarming catastrophe, which the figns of the times indicate, in my mind, to be rapidly approaching;

prepared to act or fuffer, to live and die, in the fer\_ vice of Christianity; which is no other, than the cause of liberty, and the consequent happiness of the human race: a liberty and happiness only to be raised on the foundation of that equality ascertained by the laws of our creation, and ratified by the gospel in every page, which acknowledges no distinction of bond or free. Interest may oppose, and fophistry may cavil; but Equality, in it's rational acceptation, as relating to civil privileges and impartial laws, is interwoven with Christianity itself: they must live or perish together. But they will live; and modern governments, with every appendage of wickedness and corruption, will in time disappear before them, as beasts of prey hasten to their dens of rapine and darkness from the rising fun.

Feb. 8th, 1794.

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ng; reP. S. In p. 9. I have faid, that Mr. Frend has been deprived of his fellowship: upon recollection I perceive a mistake: he has been banished only from his College and the University: but as this banishment deprives him of the principal advantages of his fellowship, and the same kind creatures would, doubtless, have made a perfect work had their power been commensurare with their wishes, and so the argument continues in full force; I did not see a sufficient reason for cancelling the least on this account.

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